



# BRIXTON '81

ALEX WHEATLE AND CECIL GUTZMORE TALK TO  
SOCIALIST WORKER ABOUT THE UPRISING AND RACISM  
40 YEARS ON >>Pages 9, 10&11

## GROWING WAVE OF PROTESTS AT POLICE BILL

REPORTS AND ANALYSIS >>Pages 3, 4&5

# Socialist Worker

£1 | No 2749 | 7 - 13 April 2021 | socialistworker.co.uk

## KILL THE BILL PROTESTS CAN WIN

# BACK THIS



PICTURE: GUY SWALLMAN

# BEAT THEM



## RESIST THE TORY CLAMPDOWN

### WHITEWASH

#### Tories' Sewell report denies systematic racism

"IF THE report had been intended to help address racism, it must surely be written off as a disaster."

So wrote black historian David Olusoga on the government's Sewell report into race and ethnic disparities.

It said institutional racism does not exist in Britain.

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### RESISTANCE



#### School students stage anti-racist revolt in Pimlico

HUNDREDS OF school students at Pimlico Academy refused to go into classes last week in a protest over racism and sexism.

They oppose a uniform policy banning "colourful" hijabs among other things.

One student said, "It's basically racist. It gives the school a bad image."

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### ANALYSIS

#### Why are Gypsies, Travellers and Roma oppressed?

THE TORY police bill will make life harder for Travellers, Roma and Gypsies.

Our rulers see aspects of Travellers' lives as a threat.

Those at the top encourage racist stereotypes, and want people to have less freedom to move around.

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## THE THINGS THEY SAY

### 'Take off the mask and open the throttle'

Labour leader **Sir Keir Starmer** says what he stands for apart from the national anthem

### 'Labour's patriotism is optimistic and inclusive, not jingoistic'

**Sir Keir Starmer** is a nice patriot

### 'No amount of wrapping yourself in a flag is going to change the fact that this government does not have a patriotic vision'

Labour's **Lisa Nandy** wraps herself in the flag to criticise the government for wrapping itself in flags or something

### 'The NHS is useless'

**Jeremy Clarkson** explains that the real cause of the Covid-19 deaths is the NHS

### 'The SWP's seemingly endless aim is to destroy the British state'

Tory MP **Bob Blackman** doesn't like the militancy of the school students in Pimlico (see page 7)



# Open the books of Tory MP who made cash off slavery

**A TORY MP whose family made millions through slavery has amended his accounts and financial declaration—again.**

Richard Drax has replaced a decade of accounts for four farming firms revealing hundreds of thousands of pounds of undisclosed business.

Under S106 of the Companies Act it is an offence to "knowingly or recklessly" make "misleading" statements.

Drax—apparently worth about £150 million—could face a parliamentary probe.

The two firms on his Register of Members' Interest declaration were registered as dormant. But Drax now admits they were active holding companies for his unlimited companies.

The South Dorset MP started replacing entries in January after interest in his wealth appeared in the press. Produce from Drax's firms—all with offices on his Charborough

estate in Dorset—includes barley for brewers and opium poppies for NHS morphine.

One firm, ACF Co Holdings Ltd, has new accounts showing its subsidiary Abbot's Court Farm (Charborough) had made £577,563 profits, and had capital and reserves of more than £1.5 million.

The accounts reveal in 2014 it had assets of more than £3.1 million, and £3.4 million in 2019.

Previously the Harrow-educated Drax failed to register in Members' Interests a Barbados sugar plantation he ran.

He had also not declared an estate in Swaledale, North Yorkshire and that he owned a £4.4 million holiday let on Sandbanks.

Drax has also been criticised for failing to pay the minimum wage to beaters at shooting parties on his walled estate.

Richard Drax

**SHADOW EQUALITIES** minister Charlotte Nichols has apologised for the "hurt caused" by a Labour campaign leaflet, which the MP was pictured delivering. It told residents the party is "dealing with Traveller incursions". The shadow women and equalities minister said she had not been aware of the "problematic" definition of the term incursion. Presumably that explains why the Labour Party can't decide whether it is against the parts of the pig bill that will criminalise Travellers.

Anti-Traveller leaflet

**PETER MANDELSON** is back, which is nice. The former MP for Hartlepool and friend of oligarch Oleg Deripaska has been advising Keir Starmer on how to win. So Labour is currently behind in the polls. Gordon Brown brought Mandelson in when he was 10 percent behind the Tories in polls and on 33 percent. With Mandelson's help he finished on 29 percent and lost the election.

## Is racism behind Meghanabilia crisis?

**INSTITUTIONAL** racism among royalists has led to a plunge in prices in Harry and Meghanabilia after the pair's TV chat.

Now they have left the royals, the market for their tat has plummeted.

Royal Doulton, the Queen's official mug maker, has slashed the cost of 26cm china replicas of the couple from £195 to £146.50. Amazon, meanwhile, is flogging Funko Pop: The Duke and Duchess of Sussex toys at £12.43—down from £18.26.

Buckley London has its imitation Meghan Sparkle Ring on offer at half price—now £12.50.

A china cup and

£12.43

saucer set is down from £24.99 to £4.99.

## Johnson's legal fees are paid by the Tory party

**TORY BOSSES** paid Boris Johnson's legal fees as he faced a probe into his relationship with Jennifer Arcuri.

Conservative Party co-chair Ben Elliot reportedly authorised payments of more than £10,000 from party coffers in 2019 to the prime minister's lawyers.

Johnson was facing an inquiry by the Independent Office for Police Conduct in 2019 into allegations of impropriety over his relationship with Arcuri when he was London mayor.

He was later cleared of misconduct in public

Johnson and Arcuri

office, a criminal offence, after an inquiry into whether Arcuri was given access to trade missions and public grants due to their affair.

However the watchdog said it would have been "wise" for him to have declared the relationship and said failure to do so may have breached principles for standards in public life.

## Nazi pig convicted

A Metropolitan Police officer has been convicted of membership of the banned neo-Nazi terrorist organisation National Action. Benjamin Hannam is the first cop officer to be convicted of a terrorism offence.

Hannam joined the police after lying about his past in an application form. He was also convicted of two counts of fraud and two counts of possessing information useful to a terrorist.

Reporting restrictions had prevented any publicity about the case due to a planned second trial involving sexual offences.

But he pleaded guilty last week to possessing child pornography. The fraud involved over £66,000 he earned from the police after joining in 2018. So how did the Sherlocks of the yard catch Hannam?

They didn't. He was caught after anti-fascists leaked data online from the neo-Nazi web forum Iron March in late 2019. His IP address was among the British users.

Scotland Yard said it had reviewed Hannam's time in the Met and "found no evidence his actions had been influenced by any extremist ideology".

And, as are all those convicted of terrorism and child pornography offences, Hannam was released on bail until his sentencing on 23 April.

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## Don't be mean to the SBS

**ELITE ARMY** unit SAS members have been banned from calling their rivals the Shaky Boats Service.

A top SAS officer is believed to have made the ruling after the SBS complained the nickname was damaging the unit's morale and reputation.

Also banned is Dope on a Rope—coined because Special Boats Service troops abseil onto vessels from helicopters.

The issue flared up when a US Seal Team Six special forces member asked an SBS man about Shaky Boats. State terrorists is of course still the correct term for all special forces.



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# To kill the bill, protests must continue to grow

by ISABEL RINGROSE

**THE POLICE are taking their revenge on people who have joined Kill The Bill protests.**

During a 5,000-strong protest in central London on Saturday, the Metropolitan Police made 107 arrests. This included two independent legal observers.

Police kettled and arrested protesters, and claimed to have discovered a small number “intent on remaining to cause disruption” as justification for their actions.

The protests are showing that new police powers will only give cops more opportunity to use violence, as seen over the last few weeks.

Seven were arrested in Bristol after a demonstration on Saturday.

This means up to 50 people have been arrested because of anti-bill protests in the city.

On Saturday some demonstrators blocked part of the M32 road—so for the fourth time in two weeks Bristol’s riot cops reacted with violence.

The protests at the weekend were powerful.

But they are still small compared to what will be needed to win.

And the high number of arrests and rising levels of violence shows the state is determined to intimidate people.

## Bigger

Everyone needs to push for bigger protests. And to grow it must continue to bring in wider issues in society that people are angry about.

The pandemic and the government’s failures can play a huge part in mobilising more people to the streets.

It’s vital that workers are at the centre of it.

Workers’ involvement should be about class anger rather than a



ON THE Kill the bill protest in London on Saturday (above and below)

PICTURES: GUY SMALLMAN



round of statements from unions that would not take anything forward.

Every trade unionist should be on the protests and demand that their union leaders actively back them.

There should be mass publicity against the bill and clear calls from the unions to turn out on the streets.

Currently a loose coalition of groups have taken to the streets—from climate activists to anti-racists, and others who want to resist the bill and defend the right to protest.

Unity in action is a powerful tool. But it shouldn’t prevent groups from taking a lead or using radical tactics

on the streets.

And unity under a class banner can hold more power for change.

The movement cannot let police tactics squash the movement, neither should the involvement of union leaders or parliamentary figures stifle the rage and anger.

Kill the Bill protesters need to be out regularly on the streets causing as much disruption as possible to kick out the Tories and their bill.

## On other pages...

Reports from Kill the Bill protests  
>> Pages 4&5

## Sexism ingrained in police

A METROPOLITAN police officer accused of raping two women still works for the force, despite undergoing a misconduct inquiry.

The accused cop also stayed in his role during a two-year criminal investigation into the allegations that were made back in 2017.

A criminal investigation was dropped in 2019 after the Crown Prosecution Service concluded there was “no realistic prospect of charge”.

Essex police said it conducted “lengthy investigations, which were carried out by specialist detectives and

highly trained civilian staff”.

But it added that “there were areas for improvement in the management of these investigations”. The two alleged victims made separate allegations of physical and sexual assault.

One of the women was awarded £17,100 in compensation by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority and the other received £11,600. Despite now facing an internal inquiry over potential breaches of professional standards, the officer has never been arrested or been charged.



Sexist institution?

## Police try to intimidate protesters

TWO WOMEN have accused police in Bristol of abuse of power after they used anti-terror tactics on them.

Both women were caught up in undercover raids by Avon and Somerset Police as part of their crackdown on protests in Bristol.

This, following the suspected murder of Sarah Everard by a police officer and the violent tactics used against protesters in Clapham, shows how sexism is at the core of the police.

Katie McGoran said she was mistakenly arrested by a male officer dressed as a postal worker after the protests in Bristol that saw clashes with police.

## Disguised

She says the disguised officer and at least three other male plain-clothed officers followed her flatmate up the stairs before revealing they had a warrant.

They then forced their way into her bedroom and handcuffed her. She was only partially dressed.

Cops kept her in handcuffs even after they realised she didn’t match the picture of who they were looking for. McGoran said they eventually uncuffed her but didn’t apologise and instead made jokes.

The same day police raided another all-female shared student house in Bristol.

Grace Hart, 16, answered the door twice to a male officer pretending to be a postal worker.

The officer reportedly barged in along with at least three other plain-clothed male officers and pointed Tasers at her, even though she didn’t attend any of the protests.

The police don’t keep us safe. The violence they claim to be clamping down on comes from them.

# Socialist Worker

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## FIGURE IT OUT

**55,259**

rapes were reported to the police in 2019

**2,102**

number of prosecutions

**1,439**

number of convictions





# Thousands march all over Britain against bill

Sophie Squire and Isabel Ringrose report from a weekend of protests against sexism, racism and the cops

**THOUSANDS OF protesters took to the streets of London on Saturday to show their anger at the police bill. It was one of many protests all across Britain throughout the weekend.**

Up to 5,000 protesters gathered at Speakers' Corner in central London carrying placards with slogans such as, "No protest, no progress," and, "I'd have better protection as a statue than as a woman."

Protester Lauren told Socialist Worker that she felt as if big protests don't happen now we'll "lose the right to protest altogether".

Many of those protesting voiced their disgust with the new Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report that denied institutional racism exists in Britain (see page 6).

## Horried

Ami told Socialist Worker that she was horrified but not surprised that the government is trying to say that racism doesn't exist.

"The Tories are trying to deny there is a problem," she said. "But they really can't hide it especially when they are racists themselves."

"I am worried that this report will give racists and those who deny racism legitimacy."

Protester Han said, "Tories have

used the pandemic to repress our freedom of speech.

"This bill really shows that really free speech doesn't actually matter to them at all."

Protesters marched to Parliament Square chanting, "Kill the bill," and, "Whose streets? Our streets."

The protest brought together groups such as Extinction Rebellion, Stand Up To Racism (SUTR), Traveller groups and LGBT+ organisations. Speakers at the rally included former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

## Linking

Fran, an activist in SUTR, told Socialist Worker that the gathering of different groups showed just how wide the threats are and how people are linking issues.

"People are angry about so much more than just the bill itself," she said. "They are angry at black and Asian deaths in custody and the fact that a higher percentage of black and Asian people have died from coronavirus."

"They are also angry this government has pushed herd immunity and have left thousands of elderly people to die in care homes. The Tories simply don't care. Now we've got to end them."

Around 500 activists also met for



ON THE streets in central London

a demonstration against violence against women in Trafalgar Square on the same day.

The protest mainly focused on the shocking findings of a YouGov poll that found 97 percent of women aged 18-24 had been sexually harassed.

Protester Jordan told Socialist Worker, "It was really powerful to see so many young women marching and protesting together."

"I think a lot of people here are able to see that so much of the sexism and racism we experience comes from the state and especially the police."

Some 3,000 people also joined Bristol's fifth protest against the bill.

At one point protesters blocked the M32 motorway and sat down in the carriageways.

One protester reported, "It was a demonstration mainly of young people with an upbeat mood."

## Toes

"The trades co uncil banner was there and an NEU union banner. That's some evidence of the labour movement dipping its toes in the water."

In Sheffield around 1,200 marched through the city centre

and staged a sit-in outside the police station. And on Friday in Leeds over 1,200 young, angry demonstrators turned out to march through the streets with drums and chanting, "This is what democracy looks like."

The crowd represented groups who will be affected by the Tories' new bill—anti-racists, climate activists, Travellers, trans activists, students, disabled people and trade unionists.

## More online

Full report of protests online at [bit.ly/Protests0304](https://bit.ly/Protests0304)



Protesters marched in Manchester

PICTURE: RAHMAN KEBBIE

## Hundreds in Manchester and Newcastle

IN MANCHESTER around 700 people marched around the city and blocked roads. Callum, who attended the protest, told Socialist Worker, "The atmosphere was full of camaraderie."

"It was very refreshing to see so many people cheering for one another. There were so many different speakers from different groups."

Callum explained that it's vital the movement "keeps coming out every week".

"If we don't use our rights they'll take them away," he said. "The

Tories introduced this bill to stop protests, but there have been more protests in the past few weeks than before. We must not back off." Later hundreds of people joined a striking bus workers' demonstration.

Hundreds of mostly young people also joined a rally at Grey's Monument in Newcastle.

After rallying, they took to one of the city's busiest roads and marched to the main council building. The protesters took the knee for a minute's silence for Sarah Everard and victims of sexism, racism and the police. One

speaker told the crowd, "What the Tories don't want us to do is fight back. The bill is about Priti Patel and the government preventing us from using our voices and getting the Tories out."

Protester Jack told Socialist Worker he joined the rally to "stand for democracy".

"We need the right to assemble for protest," he said. "That's how things fundamentally get changed."

Another protester, Annabelle, said, "They might criminalise protest, but they can't stop people protesting."





PICTURES: GUY SMALLMAN

## Action in several towns and cities

IN NORWICH 300 demonstrators took part in the day of action, and around 250 attended a protest in Weymouth. Northampton saw up to 300 people marching and rally in the town centre.

And in Oxford hundreds attended a demonstration, with placards reading, "Protest for protest," and "Democracy is dying."

About 200 turned out in Bournemouth and 400 in Birmingham.

There were also protests in Shrewsbury and Derby with climate activists and anti-racists joining forces to resist the protest-smashing bill.

Other protests were also held in Cardiff, Nottingham, Aberystwyth, Bath, Lancaster, Swindon, Folkestone, Luton, Taunton, Cambridge and Leicester.

In Liverpool, on the same day, 130 people protested over commissioners taking over the council and 350 joined a kill the bill demonstration.

Around 140 protesters in Glasgow marched through the city centre and chanted, "No justice, No peace. No racist police."

Although Scotland is not directly affected by the police bill, organisers said they "stand in solidarity with those protesting".

Around 400 protested in Plymouth, 250 in Weymouth.

And on Friday 1,000 people protested in Leeds and 250 people gathered in Finsbury Park in north London.

## Campaigners and trade unionists call for action

IN BRIGHTON huge numbers turned out to march to the police station, chanting, "Defund the police." They also blocked roads on the seafront and the city centre.

Around 350 people turned up in York to join the anti-bill protest.

Julie, a teacher and Unison union rep, told the crowd that workers must unite against the bill.

"Trade unions have won rights for workers through struggle through protests, strikes and picket lines," she said.

"It is these methods which work which is precisely why they are targeted by the Tory police bill."

"We need more trade unionists and workers on these

protests. Demonstrations can win change.

"But strikes affect profits and can have an even more powerful impact."

In Portsmouth about 150 protesters gathered chanting "Boris Johnson, Priti Patel, take your bill and go to hell".

Trade unionist and socialist Jon said, "Speakers from Extinction Rebellion, Stand Up To Racism and Reclaim These Streets vowed to continue protesting until the whole bill is scrapped."

"Portsmouth Trades Council unanimously passed a motion proposed by Unison to oppose the bill and call a May Day rally on Saturday 1 May to fight the bill."



## Socialist Worker WHAT WE THINK

# DITCHING PROFIT IS THE ONLY SAFE WAY OUT

**A**NY LOOSENING of the Covid-19 restrictions will feel like a relief to millions of people. But that can't hide the sickening truth that by lifting more measures next week the Tories are again prepared to gamble with our lives.

The lockdown has been so long precisely because the government had to be dragged into making every move, and then applied them inadequately.

Boris Johnson tried to radiate hope and optimism this week. But in the background the government's scientific advisory group Sage had a different message.

Minutes from a recent Sage meeting said there could be a rise in hospital admissions "of a similar scale to January 2021 after later stages of the road map". By June we could be back to where we were at the start of the year.

That's why there are repeated calls from politicians that everyone must learn to "live with the virus".

The message really is that tens of thousands of deaths are an acceptable price to get everyone back to work and let profits flow again. We shouldn't be living with

the virus, we should be eliminating it. Vaccination is essential, but it won't provide the solution on its own. Allowing the virus to spread unchecked will produce new and more virulent strains, not "herd immunity".

The way out of continuing lockdowns and the threat of rising cases and deaths is to put people before profit.

That means a period of hard measures in order to give the best hope of squeezing the number of cases to small numbers. Cases can then be isolated by proper testing and contact tracing.

This is what countries elsewhere in the world that have far fewer cases and deaths have

**Many long-term requirements aren't in the interests of capitalism**

done. This includes shutting down all non-essential industry, more workers and unlimited funds for the health and care services.

In-person teaching should only take place in schools that are safe—and not at all in universities.

Workers who can't work from home or have to isolate should receive 100 percent of their wages.

Hotels and empty homes should be taken over to provide space and comfort for those trying to isolate in cramped accommodation.

All of this clashes with the interests of the corporations.

But anything less is walking into the appalling future the scientists predict—another wave of cases, continual lurches back to lockdown.

And there can be no solution on a purely national scale.

Everyone across the world needs to be vaccinated, and re-vaccinated as necessary. That requires dumping corporate secrets and competition. It means rejecting nation-state rivalry.

There are reforms under the system that can be put in place to make society safer. But many long-term requirements aren't in capitalism's profit-driven interests.

So ultimately this has to be a fight for socialism.

## MORE THAN ONE BAD COP

**T**HE FIRST week of the trial of Derek Chauvin has underlined that George Floyd's death was murder by a police officer.

A series of witnesses—black and white—have given voice to the horror and anger at what they saw.

Prosecutors played video showing Floyd pleading with cops. The footage shows police still pinning Floyd to the floor, even after one notes he is unconscious.

The police chief of Minneapolis

testified the way that Chauvin pinned George Floyd to the ground was a "violation of policy".

We can see where this might go. Chauvin could be sacrificed in an effort to save the institution of the police as a whole. He has to be found guilty, but that won't change the nature of the cops.

The hold that killed Floyd was part of police training. It has been used by the Minneapolis police at least 237 times since 2015.

And if it were just about a few "bad officers" then why have the

US police already killed over 300 people this year?

The cops are trained to hold working class people in utter contempt and with that comes both sexism and racism.

There would be no justice for George Floyd without the Black Lives Matter movement. The millions who took to the streets are the hope of delivering real change.

That means more than an individual cop being jailed, it means abolishing the police.

## Breakfast in



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## ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



# The real link between racism and class

**THE REPORT of the Sewell Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities may look a mess. But it's a calculated political hit. It aims to erase the concept of institutional racism.**

The acknowledgement that the Metropolitan Police were institutionally racist in the 1999 Macpherson report into Stephen Lawrence's murder was a huge victory for the anti-racist movement. Tony Sewell and the Tory government are trying to reverse this.

The report is thoroughly intellectually dishonest, as numerous critics have pointed out. I'll focus on just one argument, the attempt to play race off against class.

The commission repeatedly says that "the roots of advantage and disadvantage for different groups are complex, and often as much to do with social class, 'family' culture and geography as ethnicity."

Thus they deny that the high Covid-19 death rate among black and Asian people has anything to do with racism. "The increased risk of dying from Covid-19 is mainly due to an increased risk of exposure to infection," they say.

"This is attributed to the facts that Black and South Asian people are more likely to live in urban areas with higher population density and levels of deprivation—work in higher risk occupations such as healthcare or transport, and to live with older relatives who themselves are at higher risk."

So black and Asian people are dying because they belong to the poorer sections of the working class, not because of racism. This assumes that what the commission calls "disadvantage" can be broken up into many different unrelated factors—class, race, geography, etc.

This is the wrong way of thinking about class.

Class isn't a "factor", it's a relationship. As the great Marxist historian Geoffrey de Ste Croix, put it, "class is the way in which exploitation is reflected in the social structure."

A capitalist society is structured by the class relationship between exploiters and exploited.

It is divided between the capitalists, who control society's productive resources, and the workers who create through their unpaid labour the profits these capitalists appropriate.

## Exploitation

But exploitation doesn't operate uniformly. Workers who are more vulnerable thanks to their oppression—racism, sexism or LGBT+ discrimination for example—are likely to be paid less, to work harder and to have worse working conditions.

The black Communist Claudia Jones pointed out in a classic 1949 article that exploitation and oppression can be mutually reinforcing. She wrote about black women in the United States, using the word "Negro" which was then acceptable.

"Negro women—as workers, as Negroes, and as women—are the most oppressed stratum of the whole population," she wrote.

So it's nonsense to counterpose race and class. Class—in the sense of the exploitive relationship between bosses and workers—operates through racism.

Racism and other kinds of oppression don't just make some working class people vulnerable. They weaken the working class as a whole because oppression divides workers.

The report itself is an example of this kind of divide and rule. It tries to play off what it calls the "white working class" against black and Asian people.

It declares, for example, that "it is the poorer white people, outside London, who are the largest group to be found in areas with multidimensional disadvantages".

Britain is a class society where, according to the 2011 census, 87.2 percent of the population were white and 12.9 percent belonged to ethnic minorities. So of course there are more poor white people.

Indeed, as the great African-American scholar WEB du Bois pointed out, one mechanism keeping them poor is the racist fantasy that they are superior to black people.

So in a deeper sense class does trump race.

A united working class could sweep away the different forms of oppression and their roots in capitalism. But this requires the most determined fight against racism.

And on a world scale, du Bois writes, "the freeing of labour is the freeing of that basic majority of workers who are yellow, brown, and black".

THE GOVERNMENT wants to whitewash Britain's racism

# Government's Sewell report denies systematic racism

**"IF THE report had been intended to help address racism in Britain, it must surely be written off as a disaster."**

So writes David Olusoga, one of Britain's highest profile black historians, on the report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published last week.

His view is shared by many.

As well as telling us that institutional racism does not exist, the report also says it's pointless to see black and minority ethnic people as having anything in common.

No pattern shows systematic discrimination across ethnic groups, the authors insist.

## Experience

But the experience of the pandemic points in exactly the opposite direction.

It's no accident that black and South Asian men are 4.2 times and 3.6 times more likely to die from Covid-19 compared to their white counterparts.

The British Medical Journal points out that systemic racism, and in particular residential segregation, is driving ethnic differences in health, education, employment and poverty.

If no racism similarly affects black and South Asian people, how do we explain the similarities in their experience? And, when it comes

to schools, the Commission is keen to revive an argument that "white working class" pupils are disadvantaged by policies designed to help ethnic minorities succeed.

As evidence the authors tell us that children from most ethnic minorities do as well or better than white pupils. Black Caribbean pupils are the only group to perform less well.

For Sewell and his collaborators, educational achievement is a zero-sum game where if some groups advance others must be

left behind. Unfortunately, Labour MP Jess Phillips was happy to play the same card, tweeting, "So what exactly has the government done to improve things for white working class boys for the past 11 years?"

She followed this up by tweeting, "I'd love someone to do a study of how government policy has affected white working class families."

## Sailing

Is a Labour frontbencher now endorsing the idea of a "white working class", with

its interests separate from workers with darker skin tones?

This is sailing into the territory of the far right.

The result of seeing white people as an ethnically disadvantaged group is that real discrimination is ignored.

Asked for her view on the idea that Britain is no longer racist, Halima Begum of the Runnymede Trust, said, "Tell that to the black young mother who is four times more likely to die in childbirth than her young white neighbour."

"Tell that to the 60 percent of NHS doctors and nurses who died from Covid and were black and ethnic minority workers."

"You can't tell them that, because they are dead."

# Report blames victims to let state off the hook

**A THEME of the Commission's report is that black and minority ethnic people are using the idea of institutional racism as an "excuse" for not taking responsibility.**

**The report should ask police why black young men in London are up to 19 times more likely to be stopped and searched than whites.**

**Instead it wants us to ask why so many black children are brought up by a single parent.**

**This attempt at victim-blaming seeks to let the**

**system off the hook.**

**Structural racism is built into the key institutions of society.**

**It is then reflected elsewhere in society.**

**We should not blame ourselves for "not meeting our potential" but blame capitalism for promoting racism.**



## Got a story?

Email ideas to [reports@socialistworker.co.uk](mailto:reports@socialistworker.co.uk)



# Pimlico academy school pupils revolt over racism and sexism

Following uniform policy changes that pupils said were racist, a London school saw protests for change. **Sadie Robinson** reports on the day the students took action

**HUNDREDS OF** school students at Pimlico Academy refused to go into classes on Wednesday of last week. The London pupils were protesting against racism and sexism.

They occupied the basketball court for hours—forcing the school to close early and the principal to agree to their demands.

Leo told Socialist Worker the protest had been “productive” with “unity between students and teachers”.

Abigail added, “This started from the students. It’s the students who did this.”

Students are furious at a new uniform policy that bans hairstyles that “block the views of others”—such as Afro hair. Hijabs that are “too colourful” are also not permitted.

“It’s basically racist,” one told Socialist Worker. “It gives the school a bad image.”

“The head teacher is treating children unfairly,” added another. “We’re not allowed Afros, so that means black people aren’t being treated the same as white people.”

“And they never talk about Black Lives Matter.” Students said there was nothing to celebrate Black History Month last year in the school.

Chants of, “Black Lives Matter” and, “We want change,” rang out. Some students held anti-racist placards.

## Highlight

Others wore red to remember Sarah Everard, who was kidnapped and killed earlier last month, and many wore red heart stickers to highlight sexual harassment.

“There are so many issues in the school,” said one student. “There have been sexual assaults but nothing is done about them. They said that if we protest we could be expelled. But they can’t expel all of us.”

Anger has been building since a new principal, Daniel Smith, took over in September. Students told Socialist Worker that they have since felt “excluded” from a say in what happens in school.

“We had a student council, but it was shut down,” explained Aidan. “I wouldn’t say the head teacher is racist. But we asked him to take down a Union Jack flag several times, and he ignored us.”

There was a defiant and supportive atmosphere as parents, former school students, youth workers and locals gathered to watch the student protest. “They’re showing their power,” said one parent. “It’s nice to see.”

**A SIT-IN at the school was supported by parents, teachers and local people**

Some parents have organised a petition demanding the principal resigns. Several told Socialist Worker that the way the school is run is damaging. And NEU union members at the school have held a vote of no confidence in the principal. They could look to strikes.

Abigail said, “Lots of teachers want to leave. Before Mr Smith came we didn’t have any of that. So it’s obvious that he’s the main reason they are leaving.”

Students stressed that they wanted action, not just promises of changes.

Leo said he was “scared there will be broken promises, and they’ll push things under the rug”.

But Aidan said the protest had boosted students for future battles. “We’re more confident now,” he said. “So if he tries to do this kind of ridiculousness again after Easter, he knows we won’t just be quiet about it.”

Names have been changed

## ‘I feel intimidated in school’

**STUDENTS SAID** that the school has become more “formal” since Smith took over as principal last year.

“I’m in Year 11 and it used to be a very positive place,” said Leo. “Now I feel intimidated in school.”

“It feels authoritarian and restrictive, which makes it harder to learn. The culture is different—it’s very ‘British’ oriented, even with the food.”

“We all come from very different cultures. That should be respected.”

Abigail said, “There used to be a ‘wall of fame’ in the Drama department—that’s been taken down. We had an LGBT+ community noticeboard. They’ve taken that down.”

“Now the walls are all blank. It’s like a prison.”

Alex was angry at how the new principal has imposed changes.

“He makes all these rules and then hands responsibility for it to other people,” he said. “Other teachers were out talking to us during the protest. But he hasn’t been out all day.”

“You’d expect a head to get to know students individually and talk to them.”

“But the only encounter I’ve had with him was him telling me off in a corridor.”

## Strict

Parents told Socialist Worker that the strict new uniform policy has seen tags being cut off students’ Kickers shoes.

One said, “We have a parent teacher association but it’s not allowed to meet in school.”

Parents have been told not to pick children up at school because of social distancing.

“But really they just don’t want us interfering.”

An ex-Pimlico student who came to show support said it is “sad” to see how the school has changed. “When I came here a few years ago, it was all about inclusion,” she said.

“But now I feel like the voices of young people are hushed.”

“A lot of the time, young people aren’t listened to.”

## The right fears resistance

**TORY DONOR**, peer and private equity tycoon Lord Nash heads the Future Academies trust that runs Pimlico Academy.

Teachers there struck and protested in 2008 when Nash successfully lobbied to take over the school.

Tory-run Westminster council approved the academisation plan despite three consultations showing overwhelming opposition.

So there was fury from the right wing press at the strength of the Pimlico protest. The Times newspaper devoted several articles to Tory MPs denouncing it.

The Daily Mail newspaper

raged about the “academy of anarchy” where students had the audacity to question principal Daniel Smith. It was unhappy at “Marxists cynically exploiting” the action, after some students carried Socialist Workers Party placards.

Its real fear is about the impact action can have. “The tactics worked,” it said of the student protest.



# Virus still on the rise, despite the vaccine

Covid-19 infections are still soaring around the world, and it's no time to end safety measures, says **Sam Ord**

**THE WORLD is not emerging from the pandemic—instead it is set to reach new record highs.**

Covid-19 is not over, and analysis based on one country has to start with the bigger picture.

Premature loosening of lockdown restrictions following “vaccine success” in Chile, South America is a warning to other nations.

Despite having the fastest vaccination rate per capita, the return to work has led to a terrifying spike in Covid-19 cases.

Daily infections have hit a national record of over 7,000 causing intense pressure on both hospitals and morgues. In the city of Valparaiso, the morgue has run out of space and is now storing bodies in hallways.

President Sebastian Pinera has belatedly ordered a new lockdown.

But the lack of social support will further push the 70 percent of the population earning below £500 a month to the edge.

India hit over 100,000 new daily infections this week taking the national total to over 12.5 million cases.

India has the third largest coronavirus infection rate, and at least 165,000 people have died.

## Infection

Regional lockdowns and curfews have now been implemented. In the worst hit state Maharashtra—which reached over 57,000 daily infections this week—non-essential businesses and large gatherings have been shut down.

Top health official VK Paul described the outbreak as having “the potential to overwhelm resources.” India with a population of over 1.3 billion has currently issued 70 million first doses of the vaccine.

Far right prime minister Narendra Modi claims that the blame lies with ordinary people not complying with safety measures.

In France 66,000 new infections were recorded on Sunday. President Emmanuel Macron tried to curb

## BACK STORY

**Across the world coronavirus cases are still on the rise, with South America and India particularly badly hit**

●In Brazil and India a shocking 100,000 cases of the virus were recorded in just one day.

●Chile closed all of its borders and Peru went into lockdown.

●There have also been reports of possible new variants of the virus in India

infections without implementing a full lockdown.

Instead he decreed half-measures plus more repressive laws that will be used against poorer people.

The third wave has the potential to be one of the deadliest despite 2.6 million people being fully vaccinated.

## Spike

Macron is desperately trying to increase the amount of intensive care unit beds following a spike of 150 seriously ill patients in a day.

And in the US Dr Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said she felt a sense of “impending doom” about the pandemic.

Her warning was reinforced by Dr Michael Osterholm, a member of president Joe Biden's Covid-19 Advisory Board.

Last weekend Osterholm said, “Here we are opening up as wide as we can. We are literally just walking into the mouth of the virus saying, ‘Don't worry.’”

“We will see in the next two weeks the highest number of cases reported globally since the beginning of the pandemic.”

The fights for safety—and for vaccines for everyone—have to be redoubled.



## On other pages...

Tories' lifting of the lockdown is unsafe >>Page 20

**MORE THAN 100,000 people tested positive for Covid-19 in India on a single day last week**

## ISRAEL

# Bigots' fury at Arab party kingmaker

**ISRAELI POLITICIANS were up in arms at the idea that an Arab party might enter government following elections last week.**

Israel's two largest parties, Likud and Blue and White, competed to cobble together a coalition ahead of a deadline on Wednesday of this week.

The elections—the fourth in two years—ended without either commanding a clear majority of support in Israel's parliament, the Knesset.

Both considered doing a deal with the Arab party Ra'am, whose four elected politicians would be enough to give either side a majority.

But Israeli politicians reacted with horror and outrage.

Arabs living in Israel are Palestinians who escaped the

campaign of ethnic cleansing against them when the state was created in 1948.

Israel's racist laws separating Jews from Arabs mean that they lack equal rights and face discrimination and poverty.

Ra'am leader Mansour Abbas said he would join any government—even one led by racist warmonger Binyamin Netanyahu—to represent Arabs in Israel.

Yet Israeli politicians said the involving parties who want equal rights for Arabs would undermine the whole state of Israel.

One right wing party leader, Betzalel Smotrich, said involving Ra'am in government would cause “irreparable damage to the Jewish state”.

**Ra'am leader Mansour Abbas in talks**

## IRELAND

# Riots in North push for sectarian conflict

**LOYALIST AREAS** of Northern Ireland saw rioting last week.

Petrol bombs and bricks were thrown at police officers in Loyalist areas in Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus.

On Friday, there were violent scenes in the Sandy Row area of

Belfast as well. In Derry for several nights Loyalist areas of the Waterside part of the city saw riots.

Some 27 police officers were injured on Friday night across Belfast and Derry.

Several people were charged with rioting—some as young as 13

and 14. The bigots of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) are losing support in the polls. They have moved to raise the border in an attempt to rally Unionist backing. And they have been looking to push sectarianism.

Tension was ramped up further last week

following a decision not to prosecute 24 Sinn Féin politicians for attending a Republican funeral during Covid-19 restrictions. This led to the main Unionist parties demanding the resignation of Northern Ireland top cop, chief constable Simon Byrne.





BRIXTON 1981—police in formation prepare to attack hundreds of young people who have pelted them with bricks and stones

PICTURE: JOHN STURROCK

# UPRISING IN BRIXTON

## 1981 WHEN THE STREETS BURNED WITH RAGE

Riots in Brixton 40 years ago this month turned the tables on racist cops and gave hope to a generation that things could change. Alex Wheatle and Cecil Gutzmore spoke to Yuri Prasad about their experiences of the riots, where they came from and why the anger that caused them still exists today

**F**OR THREE nights from 10 April 1981, Brixton burned with long-accumulated rage. The Metropolitan Police had fought a war against the black people of the south London suburb for three decades. The riots were their reward.

Huge crowds of mainly, but not exclusively, black young people took to the streets and began what would become known as the “Uprising”.

They were sick of beatings at the hands of police officers, racist stop and search “Sus” laws and an education system that labelled them “subnormal”. They despaired of the mass unemployment that laid waste to the inner city and put them on the scrapheap.

In their fury shops were ransacked and their windows smashed, buildings set on fire, and many cars were torched. But above all else, the rebellion targeted the hated Metropolitan Police.

Award-winning novelist Alex Wheatle was 18 years old at the time and played an active part.

“What do I remember? I remember the



Alex Wheatle and Cecil Gutzmore

smell of petrol in the air from the petrol bombs that had been launched,” Alex told Socialist Worker. “I remember the police running from us, trying to pick up dustbin lids to protect themselves—and I remember looking up to the sky and seeing it full of missiles.

“My experience of the police was being beaten up by them—in police cells and in their vans. My friends and I were continually stopped for no reason. So when they were trying to stop us for Sus, we would either confront them, or run away.

“But now everything seemed to have flipped—they were the ones running away.”

### Mercy

Alex said he felt “exhilarated and empowered” when people fought back in the riots. But fear was “always in the back of my mind”.

“I pictured myself inside a police station, stuck in a cell at the mercy of many policemen kicking and beating me,” he said.

“So there were many emotions running through us as we were throwing bricks. But the overwhelming feeling was, ‘We are in control, they are not.’” April’s explosion of anger



Cops arrest a woman in Brixton during rioting

had been brewing for some time. In January a fire ripped through a house party just a few miles away in New Cross.

The blaze killed 13 young black people aged between 14 and 22.

Lots of people suspected that the fascists of the National Front had attacked the party. But the police weren’t interested in such questions and their investigation was a sham.

Frustration led to a 20,000-strong “Black People’s Day of Action” march through central London. The protest was angry but peaceful with people chanting, “Thirteen dead, nothing said.” But the next day the Sun newspaper ran the headline, “Day the blacks ran riot in London.”

“I remember reading those newspapers,” said Alex. “We were the ones who were intimidated. We were the ones who were threatened and called racist terms. And yet all over the media we were described as young black people running amok.

“So we knew the establishment was against us. We knew the police were against us. And we knew the government was against us.”

Community organiser Cecil Gutzmore

was a well-known figure in both Brixton and Notting Hill, and later a leading figure in the Brixton Defence Campaign. He remembers vividly the anger, and how some people had tried to warn the cops to tone down their aggressive policies.

“It didn’t stop them,” Cecil told Socialist Worker. “Instead, they organised an operation they called ‘Swamp ’81’. That meant up to 2,000 extra police in Lambeth—stopping, searching and harassing young black people.”

### Tensions

The name echoed a notorious speech by then Tory prime minister Margaret Thatcher, who had claimed people in Britain feared being “swamped” by immigrants. Cecil said the cops were “deliberately stoking tensions”.

“The particular provocation that started things in Brixton was that a black guy was stabbed and bleeding,” he explained. “Black people felt that the business of the police would have been to get the bleeding man to hospital—which they were not doing.

“So people gathered and became ever angrier, then exchanged blows, and then missiles ensued. That’s what happened on Friday evening.”

The Uprising grew during Saturday. “People were smashing windows and starting fires,” said Cecil. “I saw banks on Brixton Road and civilian and police vehicles being attacked.

“It was clear that this was a gigantic uprising.

“Eventually the police called in as many officers as would come, but their operation was not well co-ordinated. And their equipment still wasn’t all that good. Their Perspex shields caught fire when hit by petrol bombs,

>>Continued on next page



# UPRISING IN Brixton '81

>>Continued from previous page

and we found that funny. The police did not even begin to win the encounter until much later—around midnight.”

Politicians and the media painted the riots as destroying the area in which ordinary people lived. But Cecil insisted that they were targeted.

“There was nothing mindless about the violence,” he said. “Both black and white participated, and it was politically aimed. The property that was damaged was not black-owned in the main, it was actually state property.”

“More police vehicles got burnt than civilian cars. A bank was burnt down and a racist pub was also attacked.”

By Sunday, the temperature on the streets was lowering, with sporadic fighting with the police. But the authorities were clearly shaken to their core. Reports suggested that some 5,000 people had been involved.

“The police had tried to inflict fear on us,” said Alex. “But I remember seeing them on the Sunday night—row after row of police vans and coaches. And when I looked inside, I could see the fear we once had was now on their faces. They did not want to be there.”

“The aftermath was surreal. I remember two days later, it looked like a warzone. There was still smoke in the air, there were still embers from the fires, shop windows were smashed and people were boarding up their premises.”

As soon as the immediate danger passed, the state started to exact its revenge. Police rounded up hundreds of people and many were charged with riot-related offences.

## Charged

Cecil helped bring together a variety of groups to form the Brixton Defence Campaign, to defend those facing trial.

“The campaign got a list of names and addresses of those arrested,” he said. “We tried to visit all those people to ensure they were legally represented. The police race codes were attached to that list, so we knew that whites were among those who participated.”

Alex was one of those arrested and jailed.

“There was feeling that the future was going to be bleak,” he remembered. “The Rastas said that what had happened proved that we had to leave this ‘Babylon country’. And, for me personally, there was a strong sense that I didn’t want to be in this country anymore—even though I was born here.”



**Lord Scarman’s report whitewashed the cops and didn’t end stop and search**

“I didn’t feel that society wanted me, and I didn’t feel that I would ever be treated justly. I had all those feelings running through me after I started my prison term.”

“That only started to change when I learned about my own black history—the history of the Caribbean.”

But as well as dispensing harsh punishments, the state also wanted to avoid any repeat of the riots. It set up an inquiry under Lord Scarman to investigate what had happened and establish why so many people were ready to rebel.

Scarman’s report whitewashed the police and could not bring itself to demand the end of the Sus laws. But it did acknowledge that as well as “hard” policing, the state needed multi-agency “soft” policing too.

## Incorporate

“The state, in the wake of the riots, tried to incorporate a layer of community organisations,” explained Cecil. “This process was already happening before 1981. Before the Uprising, there were state-sponsored black organisations in Brixton.”

“But in the aftermath, parliament set up all sorts of equal opportunity inquiries that ensured a much more lavish supply of money. To what extent that co-opted people and changed their politics is an important question.”

“I worked in a black organisation that was state-funded, we got money through the Commission for Racial Equality. But it never stopped us from doing radical work. My politics, which are Marxist and Pan-Africanist, remained.”

“But in the 1980s, a lot of local authorities employed a whole set of black people in every area—including race advice.”

Government attempts to create a buffer had the desired effect of creating a layer of people who could claim to speak for “their community”. But it didn’t stop riots spreading across Britain that summer.

Riots broke out in Toxteth in Liverpool, Moss Side in Manchester, Chapeltown in Leeds and Handsworth in Birmingham among many other towns and cities. And though quelled, many of the same places erupted again in 1985 and 2011.

Cecil said police racism, structural discrimination and poverty are at the root of them all.

“Nothing has changed with regards to urban police forces,” he said. “Look at the way they have increased the disproportionate use of stop and search on black people.”

“And the economy is not working for people at the bottom. So there is a great deal to resist, and the cutting edge of oppression is still the same.”

“Black Lives Matter was driven by police state murders in the US. But in Britain there is also a history of police killing black people—and generally, the perpetrators get away with it.”

“Young people in 1981 had cause to resist, and it’s the same system today.”

## RIOT!

**1981**  
**10-12 April**  
 Brixton, London  
**3-4 July**  
 Southall, London  
**3-5 July**  
 Toxteth, Liverpool  
**8-11 July**  
 Moss Side, Manchester  
**10-13 July**  
 Handsworth, Birmingham  
**11-13 July**  
 Chapeltown, Leeds  
**Elsewhere in July**  
 Aldershot, Birkenhead, Blackburn, Bradford, Bristol, Chester, Coventry, Derby, Edinburgh, Ellesmere Port, Gloucester, Stoke, Halifax, High Wycombe, Huddersfield, Hull, Knaresborough, Leicester, Luton, Maidstone, Newcastle Upon Tyne, Nottingham, Portsmouth, Preston, Sheffield, Shrewsbury, Southampton, Stockport, Wolverhampton



A COP looks on as a man falls to the ground—while other police crouch under

## Support riots and fight for a re

**R**IOTS ARE a period of energised fury that see oppressed people express their anger at the system. They give a voice to those who have had theirs taken away and can expose injustices in society.

Riots can unite people on the streets against a common enemy, such as racist police. This undermines the legitimacy of the state.

And by bringing working people together, the divisions and bigoted ideas can be overcome.

Seeing ordinary people fight back against the system in riots can be uplifting. Riots expose the lie that everyone is content with society as it stands. But riots tend to be short lived.

That’s partly because the police and the state are well versed in how to crack down. Thousands of heavily militarised cops can be sent to “trouble spots” and very many arrests made quickly.

During the 2011 riots in London, for example, the authorities opened courts around the clock to sentence and jail hundreds of young people.

The ruling class can also rely on the press and the media to try to stop the militancy of the streets from spreading.

Riots can force the state to make significant concessions, such as more funding for services. But the state often quickly regains control.

Socialists should stand with everyone who is fighting against the system and for a better world. But we should also look at how to launch the strongest possible fight that has the best chance of winning.

That’s why for socialists, one of the most important tasks is to try take the anger of the street into workplaces. Workers together have a collective power that the state finds much more difficult to suppress.

The system depends on offices, schools, factories, transport systems, warehouses and other workplaces being open in order to function. So when lots of workers strike together, they pose a huge threat to the ruling class.

The bosses cannot jail a very large number of workers without causing the system to collapse.

Seeking to spread the anger of riots has other benefits too.

Rioters may have a single issue they agree on, but they can have very different ideas and goals. And the spontaneity of riots means there can be a lack of collective organisation.

So it can be hard to have discussions that involve everyone and to make unified decisions on what the next steps in the fight should be.

Broadening the challenge to the system means more opportunity for democratic decision making and planning strategies collectively.

It also means more chances to debate which tactics will take a movement forward, and which are ultimately a dead end.

Following the 1981 riots, the Tory government was forced to plough money into inner cities in a bid to stop another flare up.

Thousands of new projects, training and business opportunities suddenly emerged in areas where the local



**East of Acre Lane** by Alex Wheatle is a fast paced novel set in 1981, just as Brixton is about to explode. Available for £9.99 from Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Go to [bookmarksbookshop.co.uk](http://bookmarksbookshop.co.uk)





a rain of stones

PICTURES (ABOVE AND BELOW): JOHN STURROCK

# evolution to uproot racism



Black people faced harsh treatment

economy was either dead or dying. Local councillors fast became very powerful as an instrument of allocating grants and employing people to represent “their community”. In the wake of the Brixton riots, some black activists started to think they could use the offerings of the state to improve conditions. They started to gravitate towards the Labour Party, and in particular the Labour Party Black Sections. These campaigned for better black representation at all levels of the system. Through this process, many black people became councillors and MPs in the mid 1980s. They saw themselves as leaders and spokespersons, and the media and the state were happy to give them that privilege. Anger on the streets had created the space for new black politicians to rise. But most now decided to follow Labour ever rightwards and abandon whatever connections they had to those radicals. Despite one or two honourable exceptions, most now embraced the party’s pro-police agenda. And when rioting erupted in later years, they joined those who deplored attacks on the police and the smashing of property “in their own community”. Getting more “black faces in high places” will not get rid of racism, violent cops or poverty. To uproot racism we need a socialist revolution that puts ordinary people in charge of running society. A united working class is the only force with the power to make it.

Isabel Ringrose

## RIOT!

1958

**Notting Hill**

Caribbean people in west London fought back over fascist attacks.

1976

**Notting Hill Carnival**

66 people were arrested and 60 hospitalised after police tried to arrest a supposed pickpocket

1977

**Battle of Lewisham**

Anti-fascists stopped the police-escorted National Front from marching

1979

**Southall**

Demonstration against the National Front ends in fierce fighting with cops

1980

**Bristol**

Police raids on the Black and White Cafe triggered riots in the St Paul’s area

1981

See box (left)

1985

**Riots in Brixton, Handsworth, Tottenham**

All sparked by police harassment and racism

1987

**Riots in Chapletown, Leeds**

Police harassment sparks conflict

1989

**Riots in Dewsbury, Leeds**

Fighting after clashes between fascists and Asian youth

1993

**Welling, south London**

Anti Nazi League march clashed with police outside the British National Party headquarters

1995

**June: Manningham, Bradford**

Riot spreads after police stop football game

**December: Brixton**

Riots after death of Wayne Douglas in police custody

2001

**May: Oldham**

Hundreds of Asian youth fight police and racists

**July: Bradford**

Riots after clashes between fascists and anti-racists

2011

**Various cities**

Over 3,000 were arrested at riots in London, Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham following the police shooting of black man Mark Duggan in north London

Police were attacked and many of their cars were set ablaze in Brixton

## Police smashed up Notting Hill carnival as a test run for Brixton

**I**N 1976, police attacked Notting Hill Carnival. Socialist Worker reported at the time, “The police were to blame for the explosion of anger that turned the Notting Hill Carnival into a riot.”

Interviews with those at Carnival made clear that the heavy police presence angered many.

“We were surprised at the number of police,” teacher Kevin Jones told Socialist Worker. “You got the impression they said there was going to be trouble and went out to cause it.”

“Then we saw bottles and cans of beers flying through the air. The police got very heavy. There were white people fighting alongside black people, they were a minority

but they were there.”

Activist Sarah Cox added, “The police claim they were after pickpockets. But you get just as many pickpockets down Petticoat Lane on a Sunday or in Oxford Street on a Tuesday afternoon.

“You never see that number of police there. They don’t pick up pickpockets with uniformed police.”

Selwyn Baptiste, who chaired the committee between the carnival organisers and the police, told Socialist Worker, “The police deliberately created the conditions to discredit the carnival and remove it from Notting Hill.

“They wanted our carnival off the streets. I know that now. There’s no doubt about it at all.”

Young people in Brixton saw the police as an ‘army of occupation’



## WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

## INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

## REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

## THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

## INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

## THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to [www.swp.org.uk](http://www.swp.org.uk) or phone 020 7840 5602

## Socialist Workers Party online meetings



AN ANTI-COUP protester in Yangon, Myanmar

## What's behind the coup in Myanmar?

**BRIGHTON & HOVE**  
Thu 15 Apr, 6.30pm  
841 2142 3683

**COVENTRY**  
Wed 14 Apr 7.30pm  
823-945-1917

**EDINBURGH**  
Wed 14 Apr, 7.30pm  
431-459-112

**GLASGOW**  
Thu 15 Apr, 6.30pm  
851-5254-7239

## BIRMINGHAM

**Rosa Luxemburg — fighter for revolution**

Wed 14 Apr, 7pm

281-634-5938

**BLACK COUNTRY, SHROPSHIRE AND STAFFORDSHIRE**

**The Paris Commune of 1871, when workers stormed heaven**

Wed 14 Apr, 7.30pm

352 891 2411

## BRADFORD

**Free speech, the Tories and defending our rights**

Thu 15 Apr, 7pm

885 9187 7552

## BRISTOL

**Pamphlet launch: Capitalism and the politics of food**

Thu 15 Apr, 7.30pm

688-397-748

## BURNLEY AND PENDLE

**Riots and resistance — police, violence and the state**

Wed 14 Apr, 7.30pm

446 409 5118

## CAMBRIDGE

**Is there a north/south divide?**

Thu 15 Apr,

7.30pm

681-800-4408

## CARDIFF

**Rosa Luxemburg at 150 — why her ideas still matter today**

Wed 14 Apr, 7.30pm

630-181-4857

**CHESTERFIELD**  
**When will the unions fight?**

Thu 15 Apr,

6.30pm

829-532-877

## COLCHESTER

**Covid, job losses and pay cuts — can unions lead the fightback?**

Thu 15 Apr, 7.30pm

466-478-2013

**DUNDEE, ABERDEEN & PERTH**  
**Scottish independence at a crossroads**

Wed 14 Apr,

7.30pm

894 2628 7708

## HASTINGS

**Riots and resistance — police, violence and the state**

Wed 21 Mar, 7pm

871 7107 4592

## HOME COUNTIES

**Can Biden put the US back together again?**

Thu 15 Apr, 6.30pm

872 4922 1957

## HUDDERSFIELD

**The life, legacy and ideas of Rosa Luxemburg at 150**

Wed 14 Apr,

6.30pm

290-168-1804

## KENT

**Free speech, the Tories and defending our rights**

Thu 15 Apr, 8.15pm

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**LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE**  
**Police racism and the Mangrove Nine**

Thu 15 Apr, 7pm

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## LEEDS

**100 years since Partition — can there be a united Ireland?**

Thu 15 Apr, 7pm

881 4770 0676

**LIVERPOOL**  
**Do we still need trade unions?**

Wed 14 Apr, 7pm

493-925-5919

## LONDON: HACKNEY

**The Paris Commune of 1871 — when workers stormed heaven**

Thu 15 Apr, 7.30pm

798-534-2585

## LONDON: HARINGEY

**Indian workers and farmers — mass revolt against Modi**

Wed 14 Apr,

7.30pm

543-023-057

## LONDON: ISLINGTON

**How should we oppose racism in Britain today?**

Thu 15 Apr,

7pm

874-012-7970

## LONDON: NEWHAM

**Palestine, imperialism and the left**

Wed 14 Apr, 7pm

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**Women and the Paris Commune**

Thu 15 Apr, 7pm

529-913-6390

## LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS

**Why is the British establishment so racist?**

Wed 14 Apr,

7.30pm

818-391-0420

## LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST

**How do we fight back in the workplace?**

Wed 14 Apr,

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## LONDON: WEST AND NORTHWEST

**Police, prisons and the state**

Thu 15 Apr,

7.30pm

870 9261 517

## MANCHESTER

**100 years since Partition — can Ireland be united?**

Wed 14 Apr,

7.15pm

323-178-7151

## NEWCASTLE

**The revolutionary ideas of Angela Davis**

Wed 14 Apr, 7pm

368-595-2712

## NORWICH

**Alexei Navalny and the political crisis in Russia**

Wed 14 Apr,

7.30pm

906-652-5299

## OXFORD AND THAMES VALLEY

**Climate change, anti-racism and refugees**

Wed 14 Apr, 7pm

861 2001 6477

## PORTSMOUTH

**Indian workers and farmers — mass revolt against Modi**

Wed 14 Apr,

7.30pm

488-934-2809

**SHEFFIELD AND SOUTH YORKSHIRE**

**Indian workers and farmers — mass revolt against Modi**

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# Greta Thunberg's fight to force action for the climate

A BBC documentary focuses on the climate activist who inspired a movement. But Thunberg insists it's not all about one person, writes **Izzy Smitheman**

**GRETA THUNBERG—A Year to Change the World** is a heart wrenching call to action.

The three-part series follows the life of the famous teenage climate activist as she exposes the science behind the brutal nature of climate change.

In 2018 the 15 year old Greta Thunberg began her own "climate strike" outside the Swedish parliament.

She inspired a generation to do the same—to take to the streets across the world and demand action on climate change.

Negotiating a balance between tragedy and science, this documentary presents us with harrowing accounts of villages burnt to the ground and glaciers collapsing into the sea.

At the heart of it, Greta Thunberg is a small voice calling for big changes.

But she is forced to endure a media more obsessed with her personal life than the content of what she is saying.

And she's relentlessly patronised by governments and the rich as she calls out their lies, creative accounting and clever PR.

Capitalism's pursuit of growth puts wealth and profit above all—with little regard for the destruction it is causing.

## Urgency

Thunberg's journey highlights this by revealing the urgency of this crisis and begging for large scale change.

The fight against climate change can't be separated from the fight against capitalism.

Neither can be defeated without collective action to bring this system to its end.

This documentary shows us a brief glimpse of the future we will face if we can't do that.

In conversations with Thunberg, she says her action is born out of fear and understanding that those in power will not act unless forced to.

She is refusing to leave it to the "adults in the room"—the policymakers, politicians and corporations that have failed to act.

The documentary frames Thunberg's journey as an individual activist.

It is clear that she doesn't care for optimism—she is desperate and she is ready for change.

But through speeches and conversations, she makes clear that her voice alone is futile unless people begin to act.

*Greta Thunberg—a Year to Change the World* is on BBC1, Monday 12 April, 9pm and then on BBC iPlayer



THE SEASPIRACY poster—is the world caught in a fishing industry plot?

## Something fishy behind ocean pollution?

### DOCUMENTARY

#### SEASPIRACY

Available now on Netflix

SEASPIRACY HAS a great deal to say about capitalism's damage of our oceans from pollution and species destruction.

Director and narrator Ali Tabrizi tells of how he learned about whale and dolphin hunting—and how these animals end up in marine parks.

He unpacks campaigns against plastic straws and finds 46 percent of ocean plastic pollution comes from discarded industrial fishing gear.

He discovers more about tuna, shark finning and by-catch—unwanted or unprofitable species—from industrial fishing.

He believes there is a conspiracy of silence from mainstream environmental

groups on the destruction caused by this fishing. Tabrizi also says the relationship between the sustainable seafood badging organisations and the fishing industry is corrupt.

The film points out the vast amounts of by-catch in commercial fisheries that are badged as sustainable.

It is a serious point. What does "sustainable" mean when fisheries are "managed" yet global fish stocks are still declining?

Activists, journalists and scientists are interviewed.

There's important detail about how fish farming causes environmental destruction and disease, and about slavery at sea.

Industrial fishing in Thailand, Indonesia and Korea for example, relies on workers hired through multiple agencies that avoid responsibility for unpaid wages and safety. Workers can be held

for years in filthy, dangerous boats lacking basic sanitation and safety equipment.

These experiences are horrifying. The men Tabrizi filmed in a halfway house for escaped slaves were at sea from six to ten years, suffering terrible abuse.

But their stories don't need all the fake drama the film uses to claim that Tabrizi and his companions were at great personal risk to tell this story.

The film's limitation is that its only solution to these problems is to boycott fish, even though billions of people depend on it to survive.

It doesn't see how plastic pollution, industrial fishing, fish farming, slavery, illegal fishing and all the other issues here are linked by capitalism.

It's not a conspiracy—it's profit and the system it drives.

**Sarah Ensor**

### STREAMING

#### IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER

Out now on Netflix

THIS BIOPIC tells the story of Gerry Conlon.

Conlon was wrongly convicted for a pub bombing in 1975 after being fitted up by the cops.

Along with Paul Hill,



Conlon leaves court a free man

Carole Richardson and Paddy Armstrong he was one of the Guildford Four—victims of one of Britain's most infamous miscarriages of justice.



Daniel Day Lewis as Conlon

The film tells of his 15 years spent in prison, and his battle to be freed—including the moment he left court with his fist in the air, after refusing to be bundled out the back.

### What's on at Bookmarks

The socialist bookshop

**Alexandra Kollontai**

writings from the struggle



**Online booklaunch of a new collection, with editor and translator Cathy Porter**

6:30pm, Friday 9 April

Go to Bookmarks the socialist bookshop on Facebook

**F EGYPT'S Tahrir Square is the lasting image of the excitement of the Arab Spring, the devastated streets of Syria's suburbs are that of its defeat.**

Today Syria is mostly split in two. The regime of Bashar al-Assad and its allies control most of the south, while a large chunk of the north is in the hands of Kurdish groups backed by the US.

The disparate armed groups that occupy two small pockets of Syria's north west now have little connection to the mass protests of 2011.

The revolutionary movement was suffocated long ago.

But the early days of the revolution showed how it could have been different.

The Arab Spring reached Syria later than in other countries where people rose up in the Middle East and North Africa. Mass demonstrations and strikes had already overthrown dictators in Tunisia and Egypt before protests began in Syria.

But every regime was afraid of revolution.

Relatively small-scale protests that began in Syria in March 2011 were met with severe repression. Regime security forces kidnapped a group of young teenagers just for writing the slogan of the revolutions on the wall of their school, "The people want the downfall of the regime."

The following day there were protests in the capital Damascus and the city Aleppo demanding freedom for political prisoners on hunger strike. Riot cops attacked the protests, beating and arresting several protesters.

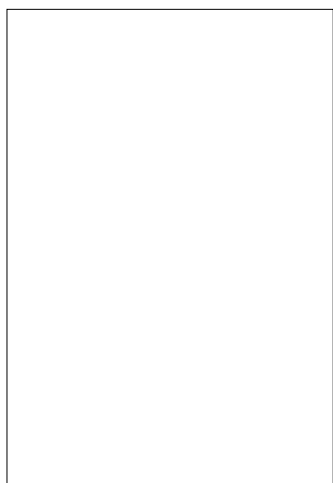
The army fired live bullets at protests in the southern city of Deraa, where the teenagers had been arrested. The victims' funerals became even larger demonstrations.

By 25 March there were large protests across the country. Despite repression—or because of it—the uprising gained momentum and mass demonstrations became common in the cities' suburbs.

Anger at years of poverty and dictatorship had finally boiled over.

Al-Assad had ruled Syria since 2000. He had pushed through many of the same free market policies that lay behind the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt.

People high up in the regime benefited from "partnership" between the state and big



**PROTESTS IN Nawa, near Daraa in April 2011 (right) didn't topple President Assad (above)**

business. Meanwhile, life for ordinary Syrians became much harder.

The regime held down resistance with laws imposing tight control on political organisations. Only those approved and monitored by the regime were allowed.

It had been decades since the last significant demonstrations or strikes—crushed with a military crackdown under the previous dictator, Assad's father Hafez al-Assad.

**S O WHEN the revolution began, Bashar al-Assad tried the same. After the first tactic of shooting demonstrators and targeting activists failed, the regime laid siege to the towns and suburbs at the centre of the uprisings.**

It bombarded the streets where people lived with shelling, airstrikes and barrels filled with explosives.

Local Coordinating Committees of activists also began organising food, medicine and security in the areas under siege.

They—not the Syrian National Council, a supposed government in waiting of exiles backed by Western governments—were the real leadership of the revolution.

Ordinary people—many of whom had never fired a weapon in their lives—joined militias to defend their neighbourhoods from the regime's forces.

These were often formed by soldiers who refused to fire on the demonstrations and defected to the revolution.

Though these militias took the name the Free Syrian Army, they never managed to become a coherent, coordinated organisation. But in the face of the military assault, they became the centre of the rebellion.

Assad's war on the revolution was meant to make a mass movement impossible. Activists were forced to flee along with millions of other Syrians as entire suburbs and neighbourhoods emptied.

At the same time, he encouraged sectarian divisions to try

# HOW THE SYRIAN REVOLUTION WAS

A decade on from the beginning of mass protests in Syria, Nick Clark investigates how murderous state repression and Western imperialism drowned resistance

and undermine the unity of the demonstrations. State media branded the demonstrators Islamist extremists, and painted itself as a protector of religious minorities.

Assad's plan was to drown the revolution in blood—and it worked. But blame for the horror also lies at the feet of rival powers whose interventions fuelled the civil war.

Regional and global states funded rebel militias in the hope of buying influence in whatever came out of the chaos.

The strength and power of militias came to depend on their relationships with competing states—not from the support of a mass movement.

In turn, they were overshadowed by Islamist groups, armed and funded by Arab states in the

Gulf. In 2014 Isis, which had grown in neighbouring Iraq thanks to the disastrous legacy of the US's failed occupation, captured huge parts of northern Syria.

It smashed any remnants of the popular revolution and executed activists.

**T HE CIVIL war became openly a site of competition between rival powers. They all saw the war as an opportunity to boost their power in the Middle East.**

The West, led by the US, threatened airstrikes against Assad in 2013.

Then in 2014 they began a bombing campaign against Isis, whose growth across Iraq and

Syria had become a threat to US power. They also backed Kurdish-led forces in the north, where the Assad regime had abandoned control—then betrayed them when the Turkish army invaded.

Meanwhile, Russian airstrikes and soldiers helped to rescue the Assad regime and massacre Syrian people.

Iran also sent military forces to join the fight—so Israel began bombing them in response.

Western governments cheered Donald Trump when he pounded a Syrian airfield with a barrage of missiles in 2017.

Amid all this, ordinary Syrians were forgotten. The civil war, driven by competing states, robbed them of their chance to take control for themselves.



**Ordinary people joined militias to defend their neighbourhoods**



# LOST

LONDON PROTEST against intervention in Syria

## Protests humiliated the warmongers

**W**armongers in the Western countries didn't get it all their own way.

Anti-war protests forced them to retreat from plans to launch airstrikes against the Assad regime in 2013. David Cameron, then Tory prime minister, wanted parliament to vote in favour of airstrikes.

But the Labour Party—and some Tory MPs—voted against after protests organised by the Stop the War Coalition.

Cameron was humiliated, and his defeat encouraged US president Barack Obama to retreat from his own plans for bombing.

Later in 2015 the Tories did force through intervention, with the support of the Labour right.

The favourite smear warmongers liked to use was that anti-war campaigners supported Assad. Politicians who threw up barbed wire to stop refugees coming to Europe used Syrians' suffering to browbeat the left.

In reality, the strength of the protests came from the legacy of the movement against the Iraq war.

Iraq showed what Western intervention in

the Middle East meant.

But there were real arguments. A section of the left—even if they didn't support the regime—ended in a position that saw opposition to Assad as implicit support for war.

Some argued, because Assad was sometimes opposed to the US and Israel, his regime was a force against imperialism in the Middle East.

That was never true—the regime had supported the US if it thought it could boost its own standing.

For others on the left, the flipside of supporting Assad was to support some form of intervention such as arming the rebels or the Kurds.

But hopes that Western intervention would help ordinary Syrians proved tragically wrong.

The alternative to both is to look to resistance by ordinary people—which is a challenge to the Assad regime and imperialism.

It's not easy to see where that might come from. But a starting point is building solidarity with refugees and opposing intervention so that resistance from below has the space to grow.

### READ MORE

- Leaving Syria by Bill Dienst £17.50
- The 'NGOisation' of the Syrian Revolution by Julie Hearn and Abdulsalam Dallal bit.ly/SyriaNGO
- Isis, imperialism and the war in Syria by Anne Alexander bit.ly/SyriaISJ

Available at Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to [bookmarksbookshop.co.uk](http://bookmarksbookshop.co.uk)



## Why are Travellers, Roma and Gypsies oppressed?

by SADIE ROBINSON

THE TORY police bill will make life harder for Travellers, Roma and Gypsies. It follows centuries of oppression that have left Travellers with a lower life expectancy, worse health, a higher risk of violence and barriers accessing services.

Roma arrived in Britain from France in the Middle Ages. They were called "Gypsy" as they were thought to be from Egypt. Those at the top quickly targeted them.

The 1530 Egyptians Act called Gypsies criminals and expelled them. A few years later, a law forced them to be branded and enslaved.

Next the death penalty was imposed.

Roma faced violence and expulsion across Europe too. Later the Nazis murdered up to half a million Gypsies during the 1930s and 1940s.

And oppression continues today.

In Britain, successive planning laws have cut the number of legitimate sites for Travellers to live on.

They've given cops a green light to harass people.

### Discrimination

The discrimination that Roma and Irish Travellers suffer is officially recognised as they are distinct ethnic groups. But why does this oppression exist?

Oppression helps those at the top of society. Things like racism divide ordinary people, so we see each other as enemies instead of allies.

They also provide scapegoats so problems caused by the system can be blamed on others.

Specific aspects of Travellers' lives mean our rulers see them as a threat. Travellers have traditionally moved between areas of common land.

But as capitalism developed, this became harder as private landlords grabbed commonly-owned land. Over time, land became concentrated in fewer hands, subject to more controls and regulations.

Ordinary people were shut out. Travellers were



ANTI-RACIST PROTESTERS welcome Travellers in Harlow

seen as a threat to the landlords who wanted less freedom to move, not more.

Moving around also helps Travellers to be defined as "foreigners" or "strangers"—both things our rulers encourage us to fear and mistrust.

Travellers, feeling unwelcome in society, can feel pushed to "keep to themselves".

This means non-Travellers may have less contact with Travellers, and so be more open to negative stereotypes.

Travellers' desire for flexibility over their work is another sticking point. It can be useful for bosses.

For instance, during the 1950s and 1960s, many Travellers picked fruit and moved depending on where work was.

It's handy for bosses to have a mobile workforce that can move when not needed, not to have to pay pensions and so on.

But employers also want workers to accept poor conditions and bosses' authority.

A report commissioned by the Irish government

**Aspects of Travellers' lives mean our rulers see them as a threat**

in the 1960s complained that Travellers were "of low economic value" due to their "way of life".

And any sense that there are alternative ways of living poses a threat to the system.

Racist ideas have justified structural discrimination against Travellers.

These dismiss Travellers as lazy, dirty, criminals, beggars and otherwise dangerous nuisances.

### Reinforced

Successive rulers have reinforced these ideas, which continue to this day. Travellers suffer what's been called the "last acceptable racism".

Even some who reject racist stereotypes about black or Asian people fall prey to them when it comes to Travellers.

These ideas help those at the top to blame Travellers and their "lifestyle choices" for the problems they suffer.

Today Travellers who travel are condemned for bringing crime and squalor to places.

If they don't travel—understandably enough given the obstacles—they're attacked for permanently "blighting" places and creating "no-go" areas.

Travellers are oppressed because it benefits those at the top of society.

Non-Travellers don't gain from this. Instead, the oppression and false divisions it spawns weaken all working class people.

Socialists should stand with Travellers against racism, oppression and for a better society.

PICTURE: HARLOW SUTR

# New pamphlet on capitalism, food and agriculture

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

A NEW report published by the World Health Organisation discusses the potential origins of the Covid-19 virus.

Each points to the same conclusion—that food production, run for profit, has led to the origination of a deadly virus.

The new pamphlet *Capitalism and the Politics of Food* by Amy Leather argues that Covid-19 is no anomaly. And with current food systems more deadly viruses are likely to cross over to humans.

Industrialised farming places enormous numbers of livestock in small spaces.

These animals are specifically bred to yield the maximum amount of profit.

## Weak

Often the way they are bred leaves them with weak immune systems, so when a virus hits it spreads and can mutate easily.

The expansion of human spaces into wild animal habitats has also led to increasingly close contact with their diseases.

This means expansion and

## CAPITALISM'S DRIVE for profit comes at the expense of people, food and the planet

the industrialisation of global food production is having deadly consequences. Not only does it lead to deadly viruses, it also leads to widespread hunger, ill-health and rising obesity.

Capitalism drives businesses to constantly compete and innovate to

ensure that they continue to make profit.

But the pamphlet explains how this drive for profit comes at the expense of both people and planet.

It is possible for the over seven billion people on this planet to have access to the food they need to survive.

In fact Amy says, "There is enough food being produced for everyone in the world to receive 3,000 calories a day."

Yet millions of people starve every year as millions of tonnes of food goes to waste.

Even the food that we are sold has much of its nutritional

value stripped away and replaced with additives and preservatives. The pamphlet also links the global food system to climate change and environmental disaster.

It says the global food system as it stands is leaving deep scars on the planet.

Many of the processes used in food production—such as the use of pesticides, fertilisers and plastic packaging—are all heavily reliant on the fossil fuel industry.

## Nutrients

Agriculture on a mass scale has led to the stripping of nutrients from the soil and deforestation.

"Marx and Engels were clear that humans are part of nature, rather than standing above it," Amy adds.

"For Marxists, human society is inextricably linked to the natural world.

"Humans have always impacted on the environment but this has been completely transformed by capitalism."

In a capitalist system the planet is just another resource to be exploited.

For many, what we eat is deeply personal. This is

backed up by how often the ruling class blame poorer people individually if they have unhealthy eating habits.

And others say that making changes to our diets such as going vegan is the best way to cut back on emissions and save the planet.

But the pamphlet is clear that to fundamentally alter a broken food system we must mount a collective response.

Movements in the last few years such as the climate strikes and the Extinction Rebellion protests have identified big business as the greatest contributors to climate change.

For the health of humans and the planet we need a different kind of food system, one that is prized away from the hands of corporations.

Read *Capitalism and the Politics of Food*.

It argues that to have a food system that really meets our needs we need a socialist system that puts ordinary people in charge of food production.

To order copies of the pamphlet, email [swcirc@swp.org.uk](mailto:swcirc@swp.org.uk) or phone 020 7840 5601. For downloads go to [bit.ly/pamphletfood](http://bit.ly/pamphletfood)

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## Suez Canal was built with blood

THE SUEZ Canal has been a vital part of global trade since opening in 1869. By allowing ships to reach the Mediterranean at a faster rate, it increased the profit margins for capitalists.

We are told that this feat of engineering was an achievement of the Suez Canal Company and clever capitalists.

Yet, behind its construction lies the Labour of an estimated 1.5 million workers, with tens of thousands estimated to have died.

The recent crisis of a stuck boat that blocked ships from passing through the canal has subsequently been solved by workers.

The ship Ever Given was finally re-floated last Monday after workers from salvage teams and tug boats dislodged the container ship from the bank.

The closure of the route was costing global trade around £5 billion a day!

Yet the wages of the workers who cleared the canal do not reflect the value of the reopening.

Rather, those workers have been exploited for their labour while capitalists reap the profits.

It wasn't capitalist ingenuity that led to the creation of the canal, it was workers who laboured and needlessly died during its construction.

It was also workers who freed the Ever Green and kept profits flowing.

Workers should claim these achievements as their own and fight for a world that sees their true value.

**Brian Claffey**  
East London



## The report's lies that Britain is a 'model of racial equality'

THE LONG awaited Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report suggests "claims of institutional racism not borne out".

But Britain is built on the back of racism, and that legacy continues.

Downing Street responded to the report saying Britain should be seen as a "model of racial equality". Politicians are choosing to ignore the facts.

Black people are nine times more likely to be stopped and searched. Legislation is being pushed to endanger and victimise Travellers, Gypsies and refugees.

Cardiff police stand accused of several serious incidents and home secretary Priti Patel continues to whip up the hostile environment.

Yet one of the only things the

report can suggest is the scrapping of the term Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME).

The term is often criticised as problematic—too broad to describe the communities it is supposed to represent.

Although a critique of this term is valid, we mustn't forget the term can also unify different communities experiencing oppression.

The year 2020 was hit by two pandemics—one of racism and one of health. Black and Asian people were disproportionately affected by both, this reflects the inequality in our society.

The pandemic has shone a spotlight on how we envision our society to be. We want to live in a society that is not under threat

from the police or a violent state.

Change however does not come from parliament but is fought for in the streets. Every civil right was gained from protests.

The Black Lives Matter protests last summer were inspiring and made gains. It showed a small glimpse of what's possible.

We need to continue to fight, and not allow a racist government to have a say on what is and isn't racist.

That includes fighting the government's Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill, which criminalises disruptive anti-racist protesters with hefty sentences.

We cannot allow this government to deny us a world without racism.

**Suhella Ahmed**  
South London

## Working from home is not a day off for us

IN AN attempt to encourage the reopening of offices Boris Johnson comments that people "have had quite a few days off".

Not only is the statement untrue for many, it dangerously ignores the scientific advice stating it's still unsafe to return to workplaces.

Throughout the pandemic the Tories have shown a complete disregard for people's mental wellbeing and this is no different.

Key workers have been working non-stop to

support us throughout the pandemic, yet the government now turns its back.

Recommending that nurses and the other health workers receive a measly 1 percent pay rise is a disgrace.

So is telling them they should be grateful because no one else got an increase.

Finally the idea that people "have had quite a few days off" shows once again if we're not making them money we're not worth the Tories' time.

**Molly Docherty**  
Manchester

## The rich will not solve climate change

A BRILLIANT article in Socialist Worker (24 February) on Bill Gates' book, How to Avoid a Climate Disaster. The title certainly raised my eyebrow to start with.

The people who are blind to the facts are the people who are blind to sexism, racism and violence.

I have recently received communications from Greenpeace, who I deeply respect, but beg to differ on some of their theories on future power solutions.

But at least that's possible with a magnanimous

organisation. I wish I could say the same for the consumerist sector of our society.

The same must be said for those who are not socialist—they should be deemed "anti-socialist"—which instantly shines a different light on their actions.

It makes you wish you could take this article and somehow, in real right wing manner, force it into the minds of the Conservative ivory tower brigade.

They really, as Socialist Worker says, know nothing of conservation, but we must try.

I have missed this political interaction, living out in the sticks, I'm off to grab my wallet and subscribe!

Top marks Socialist Worker.

**Dave MacFarlane**  
Leven, Fife

Just a thought...

## Close Guantanamo

I LOVE Socialist Worker for highlighting the issues in Guantanamo Bay. I stumbled across the film The Mauritanian and there's a lot more to the story than the film shows.

Mohamedou Ould Salahi has called on US president Joe Biden to close Guantanamo. Will he even respond?

**Ika**  
Oxfordshire

## Now give up on Labour

BRISTOL'S "Labour" mayor Marvin Rees says that Kill The Bill protesters "have no strategy or connection to any real politics".

That's rich, he should look at his own "Labour Party". It has no strategy other than supporting the Tories at key moments.

It has no connection to the politics of everyday life and struggle for ordinary people.

**Alan Tremeeer**  
Harrow

## We can break the state

CIVIL disobedience works. The leading political parties need to stop treating people like slaves for the elite.

People need to fight much harder and break these political parties.

**Paul**  
On Twitter

## Schools are virus hot spots

A SURGE in coronavirus cases in schools was entirely predictable as they returned.

What is crucial is to know what effect this will have on hospitalisation, long Covid and deaths.

This will no doubt put the NHS in a worse place.

**Robert Green**  
On Facebook

## Parliament will not beat Tories

THIS government is using the virus as a power grab. Unfortunately Labour's Keir Starmer is helping it, just like previous Lib Dem leader Jo Swinson did.

The Tories still aren't being challenged. The fight is clearly outside parliament.

**Matt**  
On Twitter



# British Gas sackings—unions have to hit back

Bosses' ruthless 'fire and rehire' plan at British Gas is a threat to all workers, argues **Sophie Squire**

**BRITISH GAS** workers are furious and frustrated after receiving the bosses' final ultimatum to sign a punitive new contract or face the sack.

The GMB union has announced a one-day walkout on 14 April—the date when all those who haven't signed will be fired.

Around 7,000 workers have already struck for an impressive 42 days to stop parent company Centrica's fire and rehire plan.

Up to 1,000 strikers refused to sign in the face of the vicious tactics by bosses.

Ben, a British Gas worker, says the workers who didn't sign the new contract are being left in the dark by the company and the union. "On a GMB call for members the union barely mentioned those of us who refused to sign," he told Socialist Worker.

"Instead, they went on about what trousers we wanted to wear for work in summer. We were looking to the union to give us support and leadership but many of us didn't get the answers we needed."

The inaction of the union leaders has led Ben to try and organise among workers around him. "I'm part of a group of 50 workers who haven't signed," he explained.

"We have a short amount of time to appeal our dismissal so I'm trying to write a template for others to use to do this."

"I'm also searching for legal advice to see if there's a way to move forward."

## Belongings

Some workers, such as engineer Dean, have decided not to continue working for British Gas. "I've been round to my van today and taken my personal belongings out of it," Dean told Socialist Worker.

"I'm starting to feel depressed and very lonely. I tidied my van up so it's ready to give back."

"It feels like my heart is being ripped out of my chest. I didn't and don't want to leave this company but I cannot stay." Now Dean

## BACK STORY

**British Gas workers have struck for over 40 days against a 'fire and rehire' plan by bosses**

- The plan would force workers to sign new, worse contracts
- They would see staff work longer hours for less pay, and also increase unsocial hours
- Workers overwhelmingly threw out a deal early in March that kept the attacks in place
- They have fought heroically—but their GMB union has not led a strong enough struggle

fears bosses will try to charge him for "missing tools" he never had because of an inaccurate inventory system.

Workers were right to refuse to sign inferior contracts. But those who signed did so because of the company's bullying and the GMB bureaucracy's failure to provide proper leadership at key points.

British Gas should be a warning to the whole trade union movement.

Bosses have used ruthless tactics to force through fire and rehire and try to break resistance. Now bosses everywhere will be thinking that they could do the same.

"A national walkout of bus drivers, NHS workers and care home workers could mean the end of fire and rehire," said Ben.

"It could make the government act."

The GMB should call for an all-out strike of its members in British Gas, whether they have signed the contract or not. It should also call on those who aren't in the union or are in other unions at the company to support it.

That sort of action could be sustained by the whole trade union movement.



## On other pages...

Tory lockdown easing puts lives at risk >>Page 20



**BRITISH GAS** workers have fought heroically—union leaders have let them down

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

# Scottish college lecturers stage a two-day strike in battle to save jobs

by **CHARLIE KIMBER**

**COLLEGE LECTURERS** across Scotland launched a two-day strike on Wednesday of last week in a continuing dispute over the replacement of lecturers with poorer paid instructors on worse conditions.

The EIS-Fela union members struck for a day the previous week, and have announced a programme of escalating action.

Workers' anger is heightened because bosses reneged on their own deal shortly after EIS-Fela members had accepted it.

The deal said, in effect, that the people who lecture in colleges are lecturers. But the bosses then realised their own proposals would frustrate plans to replace lecturers.

## System

There is a foretaste of what this means at Forth Valley College (FVC) in Falkirk, Alloa and Stirling where the system is already in place.

EIS members there are holding 18 days of strikes against the move. Hundreds of people joined an online rally on Wednesday to support the battle at FVC. Anne-

Marie Harley, the EIS branch convenor at FVC, said, "Last February the college informed us they were shifting some lecturer posts to become 'instructor assessors'."

"The choice for existing staff was to take voluntary severance or to sign the new contracts."

College bosses are using a form of the fire and rehire tactics that are infecting many other areas.

"The college has agreed to a review. But we don't trust it because it's being carried out by management," added Anne-Marie.

She stressed that the fight at FVC matters because if it is unchallenged, it will spread across the whole sector.

Replacing lecturers either wholesale or in part—such as half the week lecturing, half the week doing a non-lecturing role—affects at least half the sector.

This includes Ayrshire, Argyll, Borders, City of Glasgow College, Edinburgh, Fife, Forth Valley, Inverness, Moray, Perth, and West Lothian colleges.

City of Glasgow College, the largest college in Scotland, has just advertised a support staff job which includes the term "lecturing"

in the job description three times. This is open provocation.

Amber Little, a FVC student, told the rally, "Thank you to striking lecturers. Students need lecturers, not some watered down post."

FVC lecturer William Dick said, "We're getting shafted, it's a kick in the teeth."

## Skills

Margaret Smith, former EIS president, said, "The pandemic has taught us how we depend on people with practical skills and knowledge. These are the people who have come through FE colleges."

Closing the rally John Kelly, the EIS-Fela national salaries convenor, said, "The Scottish government has a weak spot over education. We are going to keep asking Nicola Sturgeon—if someone is preparing classes, teaching classes and assessing students, are they a lecturer?"

The strikes could embarrass the Scottish National Party in the run-up to the 6 May elections. It's good the EIS is escalating the action, and it must continue to do so—if necessary to an all-out strike.

Send messages of solidarity to [dongluckstein@gmail.com](mailto:dongluckstein@gmail.com)



## BUSES

# Bus revolt in London and Go North West

by SAM ORD

**BUS DRIVERS** in Manchester and the west and south of London have stepped up their fights after talks with bosses failed.

London United bosses are on the attack with plans to cut wages by up to £2,500 a year and also force some drivers to work longer hours.

The Unite union members work for a subsidiary of the RATP multinational. This operates in 13 countries across four continents.

Strikes were postponed last week to allow negotiations to take place. But the talks went nowhere.

## Contract

Workers struck on Wednesday and Thursday last week and plan strikes on this Wednesday and next two Wednesdays after that.

In addition, drivers at both Stamford Brook and Hounslow Heath have voted to join the strikes.

It will mean that further strikes beginning on Thursday 15 April will involve London United drivers at all seven of its garages. The five



A CAVALCADE for Manchester strikers last Saturday

PICTURE: UNITE NORTH WEST

depots already taking action are Fulwell, Hounslow, Park Royal, Shepherd's Bush and Tolworth garages.

One driver based at Shepherd's Bush garage told Socialist Worker, "We know they have the money. Most of us haven't had a pay rise in the past three or four years."

Three weeks ago RATP worldwide announced its 2020 results. Despite what management called a year of "successive crises (strikes, Covid-19)" the firm posted a turnover of £4,700 million.

Alongside London, 400 bus drivers in Greater Manchester are set to continue strikes after negotiations failed.

The Go North West workers have been on an all-out strike against fire and rehire since 28 February

Bosses effectively expect drivers to work unpaid for 130 hours each year, leaving them £2,500 a year worse off. And despite the pandemic, bosses are pushing a 67 percent reduction in sick pay.

Workers were given just

eight days to accept the new contracts or be sacked.

The workers and the wider trade union movement held a cavalcade and rally last Saturday.

It was organised by the trades council and the People's Assembly.

Senior Unite rep Colin Hayden told the rally. "We are out and we are staying out. We will not return under these inferior conditions."

"We will fight this company with every element of our trade union."

## HEALTH WORKERS

## Action over pay in NHS

**HEALTH WORKERS** labelled Boris Johnson an "April Fool" on 1 April.

They held a series of lunchtime protests and social media events as part of their campaign for a substantial pay rise.

The Unison union called for activity on Thursday 1 April because it was the date that hundreds of thousands of NHS workers were due to get their pay rise.

However, Unison did very little to build for it.

But not only has Johnson's Tory government offered a paltry 1 percent increase, it has also delayed any pay increase until the summer.

Diana, a community health worker in east London, organised a small protest at Mile End hospital. "It was very lively and very angry," she told Socialist Worker. "There were about

25 or 30 people, mostly community district nurses and therapists out with us.

"People were making connections between our rubbish pay, the failure to get us decent PPE protective gear, and racism."

There were also protests at the giant UCH hospital in central London.

Other trade unionists joined the action.

Protests took place at North Middlesex Hospital, Royal Glamorgan Hospital, Royal Lancaster Infirmary and in other towns and cities, including Barnsley and Chesterfield, and in Glasgow the day before.

Campaigners need to use every opportunity to get workers involved in activity.

That's the best way to build the mood for strikes—and push the union leaders to give more of a lead.

## PRIVATISATION

**TORY CLAIMS** to have ended NHS privatisation are in tatters. It was revealed last week that the head of a key private health firm is now a top adviser to Boris Johnson.

Samantha Jones was until recently a boss at Openrose Health—owned by US health insurance giant Centene Corporation.

As Socialist Worker previously reported, Centene took over scores of NHS GP surgeries through its British subsidiary Openrose Health earlier this year.

Campaigners fear that surgeries will now be staffed in the cheapest way possible, with regular doctors replaced by locums, and cheaper

medical staff.

Now it appears that the firm, which has faced a number of fraud and corruption law suits in the US, has got just what it needed. They have someone in the heart of government who could give them more access to the NHS.

Campaigner Allyson Pollock told the Camden New Journal newspaper that Jones's appointment showed that the government's "direction of travel is clear".

"The government is fully committed to the full privatisation of our health services and remodelling them along US lines," she said.

## CONSTRUCTION

## Deskilling fight escalates

**THE BATTLE** against deskilling in construction saw protests for the first time at the Hinkley Point nuclear site in Somerset last week.

Wednesday also saw protests in London, Glasgow, and the north west of England.

Energy giant EDF and its partners are building the Hinkley C plant in Somerset.

Firms there have created new grades to undercut industry terms and conditions.

The bosses' MEH Alliance at Hinkley Point C is a consortium made up of Altrad, Balfour Beatty Bailey, Cavendish Nuclear and Doosan Babcock. It has called the new rate-busting grades Electrical Support Operatives (ESO).

It withdrew the grade after protests—but has now seemingly rebranded it as Hinkley Site

Operative (HSO) grade.

As much as 80 percent of the electrical work at the site looks likely to be moved to the new grade.

The protest at the Hinkley site blocked the road as buses arrived bringing people to work on the site.

The Unite union chose last week to repudiate the action at Hinkley Point and advised workers at the site not to join the demonstration.

Its enthusiasm for recognition on site seems larger than its enthusiasm for defending workers' terms and conditions.

One worker on the protest told Reel News, "If the new grade isn't completely taken off the table and replaced with NVQ Level 3 apprenticeships, we'll be back down here. Wait till we have hundreds coming down here."

## DELIVERY WORKERS

## Resistance at Deliveroo

**DELIVEROO FOOD** delivery workers were set to strike on Wednesday.

Deliveroo last week made what has been described as "the least successful stock market float" in history, nicknamed "Floperoo".

Now workers are striking to demand better pay and conditions.

Deliveroo worker Joseph said, "I've worked throughout the pandemic and it's difficult to make ends meet."

"Deliveroo's hiring more people and endlessly driving our income down."

"We will not let them take us for a ride."

Members of the IWGB union will be on strike and rallying in areas including Wolverhampton, Reading, Sheffield, York and London.

For more info on the strikes follow @IWGB\_CLB on Twitter and donate to the hardship fund [bit.ly/IWGBcouriersstrikefund](https://bit.ly/IWGBcouriersstrikefund)

## CIVIL SERVICE

## Courts will see strikes

**OUTSOURCED** security guards working in the courts and tribunals service are set to strike for a living wage between Tuesday and Thursday of next week.

The security guards, who work for contractor OCS, are members of the PCS union. They voted by more than 91 percent for strikes after rejecting a pay increase of just 13p per hour.

Further strikes are set for between Tuesday 20 and Thursday 22 April.

Meanwhile a strike by other courts and tribunals system workers was called off after the PCS said bosses had granted "significant concessions."

They agreed to monitor court capacity and facilitate more working from home.

THE PCS union called off a strike by passport officers at Heathrow Airport last week. Bosses have offered talks.

## ROUND-UP

WORKERS AT aerospace parts firm SPS Technologies in Leicester continue a strike over fire and rehire cuts that will cost them up to £3,000 a year.

Strikes by 200 Unite union members began on 12 March, and escalated to a continuous strike until 3 June.

WATER WORKERS at Bristol Water struck on Tuesday to demand the end of a pay freeze and better pensions.

The members of the GMB union voted 75 percent in favour of strikes.

UCU UNION members at the University of Leicester are balloting for strikes to defend jobs. Bosses had threatened 145 compulsory redundancies.

They have cut this number after some workers took "voluntary" redundancy, but many workers remain at risk.

COUNCIL WORKERS in Thurrock, Essex are set to strike for three weeks over the council's plans to cut their pay and conditions.

Refuse workers, highway maintenance and streets cleaners in the Unite union plan a strike from Tuesday 13 April until Friday 7 May.

The cuts will see up to £3,500 a year slashed from their pay.

STRIKES BY Unite union members at Heathrow Airport Limited that were due to start on 2 April have been postponed as workers are balloted over an offer on pay and conditions.

AROUND 20 workers from the tenant referencing department of London-based Goodlord are on strike over fire and rehire plans. This will see wages cut by £6,000.

Unite union members have been striking since the end of February, but escalated to an indefinite strike at the beginning of March.

BANK WORKERS in the Unite union at Communis in Edinburgh were set to strike this week and next week over a pay freeze and the closure of a pension scheme.

# LOCKDOWN IS EASED BUT VIRUS GROWING

by SADIE ROBINSON

**THE TORIES plan to further ease lockdown measures across England from next week.**

All shops will reopen along with pubs, restaurants and cafes.

People will be able to visit hairdressers, indoor gyms, pools and libraries.

Official daily figures for new cases and recorded deaths have fallen. But there are still thousands of new cases every day.

The latest Office for National Statistics infection survey for the week ending 27 March showed that the percentage of people testing positive increased in the East of England.

## Authorities

Positivity rates have also increased week on week in 117 out of 315 English local authorities and cases among under 20s have risen in most regions.

Cases have soared in schools since they fully reopened last month.

There were 49 reported

**BORIS JOHNSON is continuing with his roadmap to reopen businesses**

outbreaks across all education settings between 8 and 14 March, Public Health England figures show.

Yet between 15 and 21 March this had nearly

doubled to 96. And between 22 and 28 March there were a further 107 recorded outbreaks.

The danger posed by coronavirus has not gone away.

But Boris Johnson is determined to end the current lockdown regardless of the risks.

The Tories say adults in England will be offered two

lateral flow tests a week from Friday. People should demand more tests, but we need much more to stop the spread of the virus.

Stephen Reicher from a

subcommittee of the government's Sage group of scientists said testing alone is "no solution".

He said up to 50 percent of self-administered lateral flow tests resulted in false negatives.

And he said there had to be a proper contact tracing system and support for people self-isolating.

"The government keeps seeking quick fixes," said Reicher.

"What they consistently fail to do is to build a system in which all the parts work together to contain the virus."

## Safety

But we can resist the Tories' drive to put profits first.

Civil service workers at the DVLA in Swansea struck over coronavirus safety fears this week after over 600 of them tested positive for the virus since September.

In January, workers' widespread refusal to return to primary schools forced the Tories to include schools in the lockdown.

We need more action to stop the spread of Covid-19 and thousands more unnecessary deaths.

## Vaccine passports will deepen racial divide

by YURI PRASAD

**BORIS JOHNSON has again raised the prospect of a "vaccine passport" system as a way out of lockdown.**

So-called "Covid-status certification" could allow people to return to large audience events, such as football matches, plays and gigs. But there are grave dangers.

First, there are vast differences in the level of vaccination take up.

In part this reflects levels of people's distrust of the state and Big Pharma.

**Tories want to rely on Covid-19 certificates**

But some have had difficulty accessing vaccines, or in getting time off to get over side effects afterwards.

Just 58.8 percent of black Africans over 70

years old have been vaccinated, compared to 91.3 percent of white people in the same age range.

Any passport scheme will further entrench social

divisions that discourage ethnic minorities from taking part in events, shopping or socialising in public spaces.

There are also signs that the government wants to quickly expand the scheme to push more people back to offices and factories.

Second, vaccine passports encourage a false sense of security and will likely end up eroding measures such as social distancing.

Adults who have been vaccinated can still contract the disease—and even if they have a mild infection they can still pass on the virus.

## New statistics show how long Covid hits workers

**OVER A million workers in Britain have been hit by devastating "long Covid", Office for National Statistics figures show.**

Around 122,000 of them work in the NHS, 114,000 are teachers and 30,000 are social care workers.

Many can only work part time, if at all. Workers are in pain, exhausted and suffering with concentration and memory loss.

Hospital worker Samantha described 54 symptoms since

contracting Covid-19, including breathlessness and joint pain.

"Before I caught Covid-19, no one could keep up with me," she told the Unison union. "Now some days I can't even walk."

"If I've put a wash on, it might be all I can do for the whole day."

The ONS said poorer people are more likely to suffer from long Covid.

Even when fewer people are dying from the virus, it is still taking a terrible toll.